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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Forty-seventh session

REPORT OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE (16-17 SEPTEMBER AND 2 OCTOBER 1996)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The fourth meeting of the Executive Committee's Standing Committee was opened by the Chairman of the Executive Committee, His Excellency Ambassador Jakob Esper Larsen (Denmark).
2. The Deputy High Commissioner delivered an opening statement in which he reviewed major developments since the June Standing Committee. He noted that continued support of donor and asylum countries alike remained crucial for refugees in the Great Lakes region of Africa. He recalled progress toward durable solutions in other parts of Africa, citing prospects for voluntary return in north-western Somalia, Ethiopia, Angola and perhaps Liberia. In regard to the former Yugoslavia, he said that while returns remained impeded by restraints on freedom of movement and lack of progress in guaranteeing rights, UNHCR was confident that returns to 22 target areas could be increased significantly if rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts were accelerated. In response to the situation in Northern Iraq, the High Commissioner had approved release of \$ 3.6 million from the Emergency Fund for relief items for the over 35,000 persons who had already fled to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OF THE REPORT OF THE THIRD MEETING

3. The *Provisional Annotated Agenda* (EC/46/SC/CRP.41/Rev.1) and the *Draft Report of the Third Meeting of the Standing Committee* (EC/46/SC/CRP.42) were both adopted without revision.

III. REGIONAL REVIEWS

A Overview of Regional Developments in the Americas and the Caribbean

4. Introducing the *Update on Regional Developments in the Americas and the Caribbean* (EC/46/SC/CRP.43), the Director of the Regional Bureau for the Americas and the Caribbean briefed delegations on the latest developments in the region. He recalled the considerable progress that had been made there in the implementation of solutions for refugees over the last decade. Only 82,000 of the estimated 1.5 million persons of concern to the Office still required material support, and 32,000 of them were in the final phases of reintegration in their own countries. He pointed out that the single group of refugees still in need of a durable solution was the 38,000 Guatemalan refugees residing in camps and settlements in Mexico. In this regard he welcomed the announcement by the Minister of the Interior of Mexico, on 14 August 1996, of a new policy of "stabilization" for this group, a further illustration of the generous policy of Mexico, which would help resolve this long-standing refugee situation through a combination of local integration and continued voluntary repatriation. The Director added that a UNHCR mission would develop, in cooperation with the two Governments concerned, a comprehensive multi-year plan to finalize durable solutions for Guatemalan refugees in both Mexico and Guatemala.

5. The Director also spoke of the cooperation agreements entered into by UNHCR with the Ombudsmen in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, aimed at reinforcing the institutional capacity of the Offices of the Ombudsmen in the field of protection. In the framework of the consolidation of durable solutions and in terms of prevention of refugee flows, UNHCR attached great importance to this innovative form of cooperation with national institutions in the field of human rights. The Director announced a forthcoming Regional Forum on Human Rights, Refugees and Migration in Central America, to be held in San José, Costa Rica, and convened by the Central American Council of Ombudsmen, with the active support and participation of UNHCR. In connection with the rationalization, streamlining and re-structuring of its presence in the continent over the next few years, he announced that, effective 1 January 1997, the Regional Office in Mexico would become responsible for all of Central America, with the support of a Liaison Office in Costa Rica. At a later stage, a similar merger would take place in the south with the Regional Office in Caracas assuming responsibility for all the countries in South America, assisted by a Liaison Office in Buenos Aires.

6. The Director closed his presentation with a reference to the process of revision of the immigration legislation in the United States of America and the ongoing review of the procedures of the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board. He said the Office was engaged in intensive dialogue with the authorities of both countries to ensure that the common objective of upholding asylum for genuine cases would be achieved.

7. Intervening on this item, one delegation expressed strong support for the "stabilization" plan for the Guatemalan refugees and underlined the need to continue facilitating voluntary repatriation to Guatemala. Several delegations welcomed the positive development in Mexico. Others called for a rapid finalization of durable solutions for Guatemalan refugees.

8. One delegation highlighted the progress made in reaching a final peace agreement in Guatemala and the role played by its Government in facilitating the process. The delegation underlined that once the peace agreement was concluded, Guatemala would continue to require support from the international community. Another delegation noted the downward revised projected number of Guatemalan returnees for 1996 (from 12,000 to 8,000). The delegation was aware that the repatriation process had been hampered by serious protection incidents and access to land and wondered if there were other reasons for the downward trend. The delegation also raised the issue of assistance to internally displaced persons.

9. On the issue of the cooperation agreements between UNHCR and the Ombudsmen Offices, one delegation asked whether these arrangements were a substitute for UNHCR's monitoring and protection of refugees and returnees, or whether they were intended to act as an early warning mechanism.

10. One delegation queried the need to continue implementing Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) in Belize and questioned UNHCR's support at this stage of national post-CIREFCA (International Conference on Central American Refugees) mechanisms. Several delegations expressed interest in knowing more about the partnership between UNHCR and the Organization of American States. Several delegations asked whether the time had come to invoke the cessation clause to Central American refugees. The Director responded that this clause could not be applied until profound and durable changes could be verified, that this subject was receiving continuous attention. He invited delegations wishing to do so to engage in bilateral talks on issues of mutual concern.

11. One delegation requested that more scope be given in the documentation put forward to the Committee on policies on behalf of women and children and on their results.

B. Update on Regional Developments in Asia and Oceania

12. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and Oceania introduced the *Update on Regional Developments in Asia and Oceania* (EC/46/SC/CRP.44) by noting that there had been several significant developments within the Asian region since its publication. The Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA), which formally concluded on 30 June 1996, attained certain benchmarks. Indonesia closed Galang Camp and the Philippines would continue to shelter temporarily the remaining Vietnamese population until durable solutions are adopted. In the case of Hong Kong, however, return clearances had lost some of their previous momentum. Voluntary repatriation would continue to be vigorously promoted for Lao in Thailand. The repatriation of refugees from Myanmar in Bangladesh continued, though concerns had arisen over new arrivals. UNHCR was seeking access to these individuals in Bangladesh and continued to monitor and assist returnees in Myanmar. In Nepal, it was hoped that the bilateral negotiations might lead to a mutually agreeable solution. UNHCR for its part stood ready to implement any agreement thus reached. The Director recognized the role played by the Chairman's mission in January 1996 to South Asia in helping to renew dialogue on this issue. In Sri Lanka, UNHCR was providing assistance to internally displaced persons within the framework of a coordinated United Nations response.

13. Taking the floor on this item, several delegations congratulated UNHCR and the States concerned on the progress achieved by the CPA. One delegation noted the importance of reaching a full and complete conclusion of the CPA, particularly in Hong Kong before the handover of sovereignty in June 1997, and underlined the need to find durable solutions for all Vietnamese refugees. Two delegations expressed the hope that cases pending clearance in Hong Kong would be processed quickly so as to bring the CPA to a full and final conclusion.

14. Several delegations expressed interest in being kept informed of developments with regard to exploring solutions for the refugee caseload in Nepal and showed appreciation for the initiative taken by UNHCR in meeting with the Bhutanese Government. With regard to UNHCR's operation in Myanmar, one delegation expressed the view that alleviation of poverty of returnees could be seen to be a developmental task beyond the terms of UNHCR's mandate.

15. One delegation noted that there seemed to be an inconsistency in the document with regard to statistics involving women and children. It was suggested that the terms "women" and "children" be defined clearly and applied consistently; the Director agreed this would be done. One delegation announced that it would be holding a Conference on Regional Approaches to Refugees and Displaced persons in late November in Canberra, Australia. Another delegation announced that it would be giving financial support to the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee's seminar which was scheduled to be held in Manila in early December.

C. Update on Developments in the Great Lakes Region of Africa

16. The Coordinator of the Special Unit for Rwanda and Burundi gave an oral update on the situation in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

17. In Zaire, he expressed concern over targeting by the local population in the southern Kivu region of the Banyamulengue people, a population of Rwandan extraction which had been living in Zaire for many decades. About 250 of them had already fled to Rwanda, while others threatened armed resistance, creating a security crisis which also jeopardized the lives of humanitarian workers in the area.

18. The Coordinator welcomed the recent meeting between the Prime Ministers of Zaire and Rwanda in Kigali, the assurance subsequently conveyed to UNHCR by the Zairian Prime Minister that any repatriation would be voluntary and that UNHCR would be involved in the planning of return movements, and the Rwandan communiqué which underscored the necessity for orderly return. He then noted the fears amongst refugees of *refoulement*, which led to a refugee boycott of UNHCR's scheduled routine verification exercise. The resulting tensions made access for relief workers to the camps impossible for a few days, but assistance was not suspended. However, food rations, which were in short supply, had been reduced by half. Problems of malnutrition were already evident. Finally, of great concern was the proximity of the camps to the Rwandan border, which created severe security problems.

19. In Burundi, the volatile security situation had provoked various movements both in and out of the country. In July, 15,000 Rwandan refugees were sent back to Rwanda in a forced return organized by the Burundi

Government. Later in July, the new Government put a halt to the *refoulement*, but continuing uncertainty about future security led another 50,000 refugees to decide to return in end-July/early-August to Rwanda, where government authorities, along with UNHCR and the IOM, transported the returnees to their home communes. UNHCR was scaling down its activities in Burundi since most of the refugees had repatriated. However, there remained about 300,000 Burundi refugees in the region who would eventually have to be assisted in their return.

20. In Rwanda, a genocide law was passed by the Parliament, a significant development leading to a foundation for a judicial process under which trials for the crime of genocide would begin. Continuing security problems in the western part of the country discouraged repatriation, but the Coordinator said that Rwanda seemed to be making overall progress toward stability and that the Government's policy to welcome the return of refugees was encouraging.

IV. ECOSOC RESOLUTION 1995/56

21. The Director of the Geneva office of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) opened this item by informing the meeting of the expectation that the DHA-established inter-agency task force on coordination would report on progress made in its work to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group (IASC-WG) meeting scheduled for 26 and 27 September 1996. The Assistant High Commissioner then presented the document entitled *Follow-up to ECOSOC Resolution 1995/56: Coordination of Humanitarian Operations* (EC/46/SC/CRP.47). In their introductions, both the DHA representative and the Assistant High Commissioner stressed that there remained much work to be done, including in bridging the intergovernmental and inter-agency processes, in order to present a series of conclusions and recommendations to ECOSOC in mid-1997.

22. A large number of delegations took the floor on this item, with most of them stressing the importance they gave to the strengthening of coordination amongst the various actors in humanitarian emergency response. Several welcomed the directness of the paper before them in putting forth UNHCR's views regarding coordination. A number of delegations called for the further development and elaboration of criteria on the lead agency concept. Two delegations suggested that field coordination in former Yugoslavia be examined in order to gain a clearer picture of the lead agency approach, including resource requirements. Several others supported the use of specific experiences in the dialogue on coordination and encouraged UNHCR to continue and further lessons learnt exercises. One delegation expressed the desire to see more emphasis on the role of national Governments and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in coordination. A number of delegations, while noting their appreciation of the Consolidated Appeals Process, expressed their desire to see more prioritization therein. The hope was expressed by several delegations that there would be concrete results from the forthcoming IASC-WG meeting on coordination, as well as on the role of the IASC in furthering coordination.

23. Several delegations mentioned the need for early agreement and joint planning as put forth in the paper. One stated that repatriation and reintegration should not be seen as separate tasks. Another highlighted the

Mozambique experience and encouraged further attempts at joint planning. Another delegation suggested that secondment of staff was another mechanism to further coordination. Two delegations mentioned the importance of strengthening and widening the Resident Coordinator system. Certain delegations expressed concern that different actors' mandates be respected, and suggested that a forward-looking system of complementarity be delineated. One delegation urged that dialogue on this topic should now be taken to a second stage, beyond that being undertaken by member States and agencies in their governing boards. Another asked how the UNHCR restructuring towards a situation-based approach would affect coordination, particularly at the country level.

24. In his response, the DHA representative indicated that the IASC sub-working group on coordination group would indeed be focusing on criteria for the lead agency concept and would be looking at both strategic and operational coordination. He agreed with UNHCR on the importance of furthering predictable complementarity and interoperability. Both he and the Assistant High Commissioner stressed that lead agency was but one option, albeit a preferred one in UNHCR's view, and was dependent on the character of specific emergencies. The Assistant High Commissioner also added that the lead agency for a given emergency could change over time. He confirmed that country level coordination would continue, but suggested that the IASC and its working group might examine regional and sub-regional coordination mechanisms. He reaffirmed that UNHCR would continue in the process of developing operational Memorandum of Understanding at various levels. He also reassured delegations that UNHCR did consider secondment of staff a means of furthering coordination. In concluding this item the Assistant High Commissioner stressed that predictability and timeliness in humanitarian response would assist in limiting both the length and breadth of UNHCR's role.

V. STRATEGIC POLICY FORMULATION AND DISSEMINATION

25. The Acting Director of the Centre for Documentation and Research introduced EC/46/SC/CRP.49, *Enhancing UNHCR's Capacity for Policy Research, Analysis and Dissemination*. He elaborated on the point that UNHCR was attempting to build upon its documentation and databases to develop an institutional capacity for policy research and strategic policy formulation and dissemination. This was a particularly challenging endeavour in that UNHCR was attempting to develop this capacity from existing resources through redeployment of personnel. The Director provided further information on the planned policy research agenda covering topics such as forcible transfer of populations, prevention and repatriation in the transition from war to peace. Finally, he emphasized the importance of external linkages with academic and policy institutions.

26. Delegations generally welcomed the endeavours to enhance UNHCR's policy research and strategic thinking capacity. One delegation noted that this endeavour could be taken as a model for other agencies, while others sought reassurance that UNHCR's policy research would be done in collaboration with other agencies. Another delegation queried how the policy research function related to other internal activities such as protection and evaluation, and asked for details of a work plan for policy research. A number of

delegations sought additional information on how external resources could be used to advance UNHCR's policy research work.

27. In his response, the Director expressed appreciation for the support voiced by the delegations for the new Centre for Documentation and Research. He affirmed that UNHCR emphasized collaboration with other agencies, citing a recent UNHCR conference on repatriation, reconstruction and reconciliation where United Nations humanitarian, peace-keeping and political agencies and departments were represented at the highest level. On the issue of resources, he mentioned upcoming policy conferences that were to be funded by external resources. Finally, he indicated that UNHCR would report back to the Standing Committee on its proposed work-plan and how policy research relates to operational activities.

VI. REVIEW OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WORKING METHODS

28. Introducing the document *Review of Executive Committee Working Methods* (A/AC.96/868), the Secretary of the Executive Committee noted that today's discussion was not intended to be conclusive since a complete cycle of work had yet to be completed and important aspects of the new arrangements still had to be tested. The item would be on the agenda of the Executive Committee plenary session for further discussion. He recalled that the Executive Committee had introduced new working methods last year on an experimental basis and had decided to review those arrangements after one full cycle of annual meetings. At its forthcoming plenary session, the Executive Committee therefore needed to return to this question and to decide whether or not it wished to adopt the new working arrangements definitively. During 1996, the Standing Committee had undertaken the programme of work established by the plenary, adopted a number of decisions and conclusions on matter included in its programme of work and had received documentation within the established deadlines. Further improvements in the servicing of the meetings could undoubtedly be made on the basis of experience gained which, from UNHCR's point of view, had been largely positive. He suggested that in adopting its new working methods in October the Executive Committee might wish to return to the question of enhanced observer participation which it had explicitly left pending. The Executive Committee might wish to establish a process of consultations which could, as appropriate, feed into the Standing Committee next year. The Chairman informed delegations that he had met with NGOs the week before on the issue of their participation in the work of the plenary and the Standing Committee, agreeing with them that there would be further informal discussions on the issue after the October plenary session.

29. Most delegations taking the floor on this item voiced their general support for the new Executive Committee working methods while nonetheless qualifying this support by noting the process was still in its initial stage. One delegation felt that it would be useful to receive a briefing by UNHCR managers on their assessment of the new methods.

30. The subject of enhanced NGO participation generated much comment, with a general tendency among speakers to urge caution, to warn against any erosion in the efficiency and focus of meetings. One delegation, which favoured in principle the notion of enhanced NGO participation, suggested that there should nonetheless be the possibility of restricting access to particular meetings. The delegation underlined that NGOs should not have a negotiating

role. Another delegation mentioned the possibility of self-regulating mechanisms for NGO participation. Two delegations recommended stepping back, and examining conceptually the NGO-UNHCR governing body interaction and relationship.

31. Commenting on the draft decision on Executive Committee Working Methods, some delegations posed questions regarding a proposed change to rule 43 (43 ter). One wondered if the suggestion for a list of intergovernmental organizations to be invited to subsidiary body meetings was a once only process; another queried the utility of the change, and urged that greater flexibility be allowed in inviting intergovernmental organizations.

32. On other matters, several delegations wished to know what savings, if any, would be incurred through the implementation of the new methods. One delegation advocated flexibility in terms of regional reviews, in order for topical situations to be examined by the Committee. Another delegation wondered whether document distribution could not be effected electronically. Yet another delegation asked for greater clarity in establishing the dates for Standing Committee and related meetings.

33. Responding to the questions on NGO participation, podium speakers agreed that the issue was a complex one. Regarding NGO-UNHCR Executive Committee interaction, pre-Executive Committee consultations with NGOs, UNHCR post-Standing Committee debriefings to NGOs, and the derestriction of Standing Committee documents after meetings were cited as examples of the nature of current interaction.

34. Regarding the proposed revision to the Executive Committee rules of procedure (43 ter), the Secretary explained that the reason for the proposed change was to redress an anomaly between the rules governing observer Government participation and those determining intergovernmental participation. Under present rules, Government Observer participation was subject to more stringent requirements than intergovernmental observer participation.

35. The new Executive Committee working methods would indeed give rise to savings, the Secretary explained, but much of those savings would be made under the United Nations regular budget rather than UNHCR voluntary funds. The halving of documentation, with its concomitant reduction in translation and reproduction costs, accounted for the bulk of the savings effected under the new methods. Regarding flexibility in the regional reviews, the Secretariat felt that there would be no problem in accommodating this request. On the question of dates, and the scheduling of Standing Committee meetings, the Secretary explained that the dates for subsidiary body meetings were clearer under the new structure, but that the scheduling of consultations had been somewhat less predictable.

VII. REPORTS RELATING TO OVERSIGHT

A. Human Resources Management

36. The Director of the Division of Human Resources Management introduced the document entitled *Human Resources Management* (EC/46/SC/CRP.46), and noted measures taken to address references made to training and consultancies in

the Report of the Board of Auditors (A/AC.96/853, paras. 125 to 136). She said that training programmes had increased by 80 per cent in 1995 as compared to the previous year. Job related courses had particularly focused on the need to train staff in UNHCR's administrative and financial procedures. A training advisory board had been created which now helped manage the global training budget as well as setting priorities for training activities.

37. The Director said that measures had been taken to improve administration of consultants and that the latest Internal Auditor's report noted marked improvement in this area.

38. One delegation requested that UNHCR continue to make training related information and material accessible to Governments and NGOs; another delegation noted the implications of the Delphi plan of action in respect of greatly increased training needs.

B. Inspection and Evaluation Activities

39. The principal Officer of the Inspection and Evaluation Service (IES) introduced the document *UNHCR's Inspection and Evaluation Activities* (A/AC.96/870).

40. Delegates generally stressed the importance of the inspection and evaluation of UNHCR's activities, and the follow-up to recommendations made as a result of missions. They hoped that these activities would be intensified as they were of crucial importance to the effective accomplishment of UNHCR's tasks. Several delegates expressed an interest in closer interaction between the IES and the Executive Committee. Several delegations indicated an interest in making evaluation proposals. One delegation requested that UNHCR conduct an evaluation of the regional support unit for refugee children as a starting point in an assessment of UNHCR's progress to implement the UNHCR guidelines on refugee children. Another delegation requested a similar evaluation of progress made in respect of the implementation of the policy and guidelines on refugee women. A request was made for a clear distinction between inspection, evaluation and internal audit, and for clarity on the division of labour there, and between the Controller's office and IES. One delegation also said it would like to see more reference to and consultation with the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS).

41. Several delegations raised the subject of openness in inspection and evaluation activities. While appreciating the confidentiality of much of the inspection work, delegates expressed a keen interest in sharing information on the activities undertaken, and asked if there would be scope for more joint evaluations, with Governments or other agencies.

VIII. PROGRAMMES AND FUNDING

42. This item and its related documentation (A/AC.96/865 and its three addenda) was introduced by the Director of the Division of Programmes and Operational Support, and by the Head of the Fund Raising Service. Attention was also drawn to the relevant sections of the report of the Advisory

Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ)
(A/AC.96/865/Add.4).

43. The Director of the Division of Programmes and Operational Support reviewed the 1996 revised programme estimates and the initial 1997 programme needs. Within revised 1996 overall programme needs (as at 1 September 1996) estimated at \$ 1,358,200,000, the revised General Programmes target remained at \$ 445,327,000. The overall needs for 1997 were currently estimated at \$ 1.1 billion, including a proposed General Programmes 1997 target, which the Executive Committee would be asked to approve, of \$ 452,612,000.

44. The Head of the Fund Raising Service noted that, as at 2 October 1996, new contributions to both General and Special programmes since 1 January 1996 amounted to \$ 775 million. He expressed particular satisfaction with the trend of increased contributions to General Programmes. The serious funding situation for the Great Lakes Region of Africa and the former-Yugoslavia was also highlighted, as was the need for funds for voluntary repatriation programmes in West Africa, especially to Togo and Mali.

45. Delegations, in welcoming the ACABQ report, underlined the need for it to be available to the Standing Committee in a timely fashion. Several delegations focused on the level of carry-over of funds (both under General and Special Programmes) into 1996, in particular balances remaining under the Voluntary Repatriation Fund and the Programme Reserve. In the light of the recently enlarged terms of reference for these two contingency funds, the question was raised as to their use for operations currently experiencing funding difficulties. Some delegations referred to the comments of the ACABQ on the definitions of Programme Delivery and Administrative Support costs, the application of these definitions, and the upward trend of these costs; it was asked that this issue be reviewed in the course of 1997. Another delegation stressed the need to highlight in the budgetary documentation changes in the sources of funding for operations (namely, operations moved from Special Programmes to General Programmes), and those operations which had been, or would be, terminated. Sustained efforts to broaden UNHCR's donor base were also urged. One delegation cautioned UNHCR as regards trends in grade level of staffing: UNHCR should not become a top-heavy organization. Other points raised by the ACABQ were echoed by various delegations: the need for better budgetary estimates, including more accurate numbers of beneficiaries, the necessity of enhanced training of NGOs, especially in administration and financial matters, and of a better picture of overall resources being allocated to training by UNHCR; the merits of involving implementing partners in the relevant deliberations of the Executive Committee, especially with a view to improving their accountability; the need to reflect in the Overview document the concrete results of oversight reports reflecting improved efficiency.

IX. FINANCIAL MATTERS

46. The Controller and Director of the Division of the Controller and Management Services introduced the first document under this agenda item, *Voluntary Funds administered by the High Commissioner: Accounts for the year 1995* (A/AC.96/866), by stating that the accounts conformed to the United Nations accounting standards and had been certified as such by the Panel of External Auditors of the United Nations. The Controller drew delegates'

attention to the audit opinion expressed on page 3 of the document and reminded them that this was the same certification as that required of implementing partners, as discussed in *Audit of Implementing Partners* (EC/46/CRP.45) (see below).

47. Moving on to the *Report of the Board of Auditors to the General Assembly on the Accounts of the Voluntary Funds administered by UNHCR for the period ended December 1995* (A/AC.96/869), the Controller noted that audit recommendations had been received on the following: audit certificates, programme budgeting and budgetary control, programme management, procurement, human resources management, Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) and financial statements. He pointed out that responses to these recommendations could be found in *Measures taken or proposed in response to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors* (A/AC.96/869/Add.1) and that UNHCR looked forward to discussing these recommendations further at future Standing Committees.

48. Introducing EC/46/CRP.45, the Controller explained that the document was produced in response to problems UNHCR had experienced with compliance by implementing partners of the current audit certification requirement. The proposals were a proactive initiative to obtain assurance of the financial health of partners before entering into agreements, i.e. by pre-selection and pre-audit, and by selective post-execution audit certification. UNHCR had sought advice and comments from the OIOS, the External Auditors and the ACABQ. The Controller then quoted from page 4 of the 1995 ACABQ report (A/AC.96/853/Add.1), in which the ACABQ suggested that UNHCR make proposals to change the requirements rather than face non-compliance. It was in response to recommendations from the External Auditors, and on the advice of the ACABQ, that UNHCR was presenting the proposal on certification.

49. In EC/46/CRP.45/Add.1, the comments from the OIOS and the Director of the External Audit were presented. The Controller pointed out that OIOS welcomed UNHCR's pre-qualification approach, and that they had no objection to giving up the requirement for 100 per cent audit certification and adopting a more selective and scientific approach. They also made some suggestions on risk assessment. The External Auditors, while also congratulating UNHCR on the initiative, said that anything less than a 100 per cent certification would require them to qualify the UNHCR accounts. The ACABQ report welcomed the approach but questioned the percentage of coverage. The Controller acknowledged that further discussion with the External Auditors was needed, and that, while UNHCR was not asking the Standing Committee for endorsement at this stage, comments and questions would be welcome.

50. During interventions from the delegations, UNHCR was encouraged to deal with systemic problems that emerged on an annual basis in the audit reports; it was suggested that management training and accountability would help to address this. Several delegations welcomed UNHCR's approach on the issue of audit certification, and encouraged UNHCR to continue consultations with the External Auditors and OIOS to reach agreement on the percentage and the modalities for implementation. The importance of implementation monitoring and control was stressed, and the possibility of using framework agreements was proposed to rationalize the contracting procedure. One delegation gave

full endorsement to the proposals and supported UNHCR's efforts in this regard.

51. The Controller assured delegations that the dialogue with the External Auditors would be pursued and that the Standing Committee would be kept informed. It was agreed that this item would be considered by the Standing Committee in 1997.

X. REPORT ON UNHCR'S CHANGE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

52. The Deputy High Commissioner introduced the document *Project Delphi: Plan of Action* (EC/46/SC/CRP.48). He noted that the Plan was produced within the time limit, almost entirely relying on existing staff and institutional resources. UNHCR was not seeking budgetary approvals at this stage, he said, but was rather asking Standing Committee endorsement of the broad directions foreseen in the Delphi Plan of Action. The Deputy High Commissioner undertook to maintain close consultations with the Executive Committee on the progress of Project Delphi.

53. Delegations agreed with the main thrust of the Action Plan and expressed their appreciation for the comprehensive nature of the review undertaken by UNHCR, and its use of internal resources. Delegations welcomed the decision to delegate more operation management authority to the field while cautioning that such delegation should not be at the expense of oversight and accountability. Delegation to the field should also not result in the weakening of core central functions like protection and reporting to Executive Committee members. Some speakers highlighted the importance of training for all staff, to support the change process, with particular attention to be given to the training of managers. Other speakers cautioned of the dangers of acquiring and developing new technology without a full understanding and a clear definition of user needs.

54. On the proposal in the document *Project Delphi: Plan of Action* (EC/46/SC/CRP.48, para.86) to consult with the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services on the transfer of the internal audit function relating to (and currently resourced by) UNHCR from the Audit and Management Consulting Division (AMCD) in the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) to UNHCR, a number of delegations drew attention to, and concurred with, the observations of the ACABQ on this issue. The Deputy High Commissioner assured the meeting that, in accord with the ACABQ's comments, it was UNHCR's intention to continue discussions with the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services on the issue, and to present to the Standing Committee in the course of 1997 a comprehensive paper on issues related to internal audit, which would take into account the report of the Secretary-General prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/218B.

55. Clarification about the situational approach was also sought by one delegation concerned that this concept should not impede the necessary country specific focus.

56. The Deputy High Commissioner and other members of UNHCR's senior management thanked Committee members for the encouragement and addressed extensively the issues and concerns expressed by delegates. The Committee was informed that UNHCR would now proceed with the formulation of a detailed

implementation plan as part of its effort to improve and streamline procedures. The Executive Committee would be kept informed of all major developments under Project Delphi. UNHCR would also revert on financial implications of the change programme at its January 1997 Standing Committee meeting. The draft decision endorsing the broad directions of the Action Plan for Project Delphi was adopted by the meeting (annexed). One delegation reserved the right to revert to the question, following further consultation.

XI. RENTAL OF UNHCR'S HEADQUARTERS PREMISES

57. The Chairman introduced *Montbrillant Building: Rental Costs* (EC/46/SC/CRP.40) and its addendum, and reminded the Committee that the issue had already been discussed at the June Standing Committee meeting and that delegations had asked for more time to consider the issue. The Controller then gave a history of the issue, citing the ACABQ's reports and letters (A/CN.1/R.1152 and EC/1992/SC.2/CRP.3, Annex 1) as well as the document submitted to the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters in 1992 (EC/1992/SC.2/CRP.3). He then quoted from the High Commissioner's January 1996 letter to the Swiss authorities in which she asked that UNHCR be accorded the same consideration as the World Trade Organization with regard to rental. In June 1996, the Swiss Government responded with the offer now under consideration. The ACABQ, in their recent report, had also considered the matter and made recommendations.

58. Interventions from the floor focused on two questions: first if delegations could be assured that the SwF 2.4 million could be considered a ceiling and that the rental would not increase, and second, if UNHCR could obtain clarification from the Swiss authorities as to whether the additional SwF 2 million contribution was in addition to their contributions to UNHCR's General Programmes. Some delegations felt that more clarity was needed with regard to maintenance costs, and comparative figures showing rentals paid by other international organizations, and that a consolidated paper should be prepared incorporating all this information. The Swiss delegation responded that the SwF 2 million increased contribution was indeed in addition to the General Programme contribution. It also noted that the final cost of the building had not yet been determined definitively but that it probably would not exceed the SwF 121 million which the Swiss parliament had granted to the FIPOI.

59. It was decided that more time was needed to consider a consolidated paper which UNHCR would produce. A special session of the Standing Committee would therefore be convened before the end of December 1996 to consider this issue.

XII. REVIEW OF DRAFT DECISIONS AND CONCLUSIONS FOR THE FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

60. The Rapporteur informed the Standing Committee of the two rounds of informal consultations that had already been held to draft decisions and conclusions for the forty-seventh session of the Standing Committee. A third round was scheduled for the next day (3 October). General agreement had been reached on much of the General Conclusion on International Protection as well as on the Conclusion on the CIS Conference and the Decision on Executive Committee Working Methods. While the Rapporteur indicated his intention to

complete at least one full initial review of all seven proposed decisions and conclusions prior to the start of the Executive Committee, he added that the texts of each remained open to change until adopted by the Executive Committee.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

61. The Chairman reminded delegations that the Standing Committee would reconvene on 8 October to consider the adoption of the report of its fourth meeting. He then adjourned the meeting.

DECISION ADOPTED BY THE FOURTH STANDING COMMITTEE

DECISION ON THE ACTION PLAN FOR PROJECT DELPHI

The Standing Committee,

- (a) Welcomes the Action Plan for Project Delphi (EC/46/SC/CRP.48) and endorses its broad directions;
- (b) Requests the High Commissioner to present to the January 1997 meeting of the Standing Committee a more detailed assessment of the financial implications of the Plan;
- (c) Asks to be kept regularly informed on progress in relation to Project Delphi.